

## **VIRGINIA FIRE SERVICES BOARD**

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### **Administration, Policy and Finance**

**Thursday, June 4, 2015**

A meeting of the Virginia Fire Services Board's Administration, Policy and Finance was held at the VDFP HQ.

#### **SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

James 'Randy' Wheeler – VFSB Vice-Chair & Chair of the Committee – Virginia Municipal League

Walter T. Bailey – VFSB Chair - Virginia State Firefighter's

James "Robby" Dawson – Fire Prevention Association, Committee Chairman

David Layman - Virginia Fire Chiefs Association

Bill Kyger – Association of Counties

Jeff Bailey - VA Chapter of the International Society of Fire Service Instructors

#### **SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT**

Robert Miner – Burn Building Subcommittee Chair - Virginia Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators

#### **AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT**

Brook Pittinger

Brenda Scaife

Mohamed Abbamin

Melvin Carter

Joe Thompson

John Fugman

Rhonn James

Erin Rice

#### **GUESTS PRESENT**

Chris Shaver

T.J. McAndrews

Stacey Harris

Suja Amir

Scott Garber

Melody Spivey

Shawn McGovern

#### **CHANGES IN THE AGENDA**

##### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- A. No Unfinished Business

##### **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Review of Governor's Fire Services Awards Categories – Meeting to be scheduled.
- B. Policy Review
  - i. Aid to Localities (ATL) Entitlement Program
  - ii. Burn Building Grant Program
  - iii. Regional Fire Services Training Facility Grant Program
  - iv. VFIRS Hardware Grant Program
- B. Miscellaneous Items:
  - i. Contract Modification (Regarding: Burn Building Age)
  - ii. Inspection of Burn Buildings

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments made.

#### **COMMENTS FROM THE SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR**

Randy Wheeler welcomed everyone to the meetings. He provided a background on the committee along with the duties it is assigned.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

No unfinished business.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

**Topic: Review of Governor's Fire Services Awards Categories – Meeting to be scheduled**

**Motion:** N/A

**Topic Discussion:** The group has not met yet, however, a meeting will soon be scheduled.

**Vote:** NA

**Motion Action:** NA

#### **Policy Review**

**Topic: Aid to Localities (ATL) Entitlement Program**

**Motion:** Motion to approve the two recommendations from staff relating to modification in language pertaining to furniture and software and the maintenance therefore. Revise and combine the policy and procedure into one document and to examine the following categories as additions, vehicle maintenance, insurance of vehicle, gym equipment, medical physicals, additional stations along with Burn Building Maintenance, etc.

**Topic Discussion:** There was a discussion on ATL entitlement program. Melvin Carter, Executive Director of Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VD FP) gave a brief review on the intent of the policy. Brook Pittinger, Deputy Executive Director introduced Cathy Hutchinson, from the Attorney General's Office. Cathy Hutchison was present at the committee to provide legal perspective on the ATL program.

Brook Pittinger stated that in the past application rejection was made at the agency level, and was not shared with the Virginia Fire Services Board (VFSB). However, starting FY2016, before the official denial correspondence is sent to a locality, the VFSB will be advised, in writing so that it can be discussed prior to the denial issuance.

In addition to the dissemination of those notices, VD FP will track the denials and provide a report to board members at their annual full board meetings. It was cited that VD FP hopes this process will be more effective in serving stakeholders.

Brook Pittinger spoke on the following common denials resulting from “*unallowable expenses*” as cited on the Agency Practices – Aid to Localities Entitlement Program document [Enclosure 1];

1. **Section E - #6 – non-authorized use – Furniture Purchase**: According to the ATL policy - furniture such as desks, chairs, tables, and file cabinets are not allowable expenses.

Dave Layman elaborated that in the past purchase of chairs and other furniture was allowed. Therefore, he indicated that the board needs to reconsider this.

2. **Section E - #6 – non-authorized use – Software** - Purchases of and training on general software such as the Microsoft Office Suit packages are also unallowable.

Joe Thompson, Grants and Local Aid Manager – advised that purchase of fire related software are allowed, the current policy is written in a method which strictly disallows Microsoft Office Suite.

Dave Layman suggested for the committee to make a decision on the two items mentioned above.

Randy Wheeler gave the audience an opportunity to speak.

T.J. McAndrews, Deputy Fire Chief at City of Virginia Beach Fire Department cited that he dealt with this policy in 2011 and 2012. Mr. McAndrews indicated during those two occasions, their finance office discovered their attempt to purchase items was not allowed based on the written policy.

Cathy Hutchinson, from the Attorney General’s Office indicated – this discussion is related to policy and a practice. She added that governance or updating of the policy has to be in accordance to the Code of Virginia.

Ms. Hutchinson stated that the committee has to review the policy/practice comprehensively.

In reference to the Aid to Localities Entitlement Program Policy – section related to **Statement of Policy Disbursement of Fire Fund # 6 – None-Authorized Use** - two items that correspond with the Code of Virginia that are never an allowable use of ATL funds are as follows;

- #1 - Sales Tax
- # 8 - Replacement of or to supplant locally appropriated funds.

It was further suggested to seek a “state definition” on “supplanting.”

VDFP staff suggested modification of language pertaining to furniture, software and maintenance should be considered. It was also added that there needs to be a revision of

the policy and procedure and to combine it into one document. Lastly, VDFP staff suggested that the the policy review should examine the following categories as new considerations, vehicle maintenance, insurance of vehicle, gym equipment, medical physicals, additional stations along with Burn Building Maintenance, etc.

It was further advised that agency should have the Executive Director to enact temporary denial policy while the VDFP staff modifies the policy as a whole.

VDFP staff have been tasked to make arrangements and to further allow the Attorney General's Office to review and ensure it is in compliance.

**Committee Assignment:** Randy Wheeler tasked Jeff Bailey and Dave Layman to work with VDFP staff in modification of the policy.

**Vote:** Unanimous

**Motion Action:** To be presented at the full board meeting on Friday, June 4, 2015.

**[Enclosure 1 and 4]**

**Topic: Burn Building Grant Program**

**Motion:** N/A

**Topic Discussion:** Brook Pittinger spoke about Burn Building Grant's *proration*. She provided the following background on a current topic to be discussed at the next full board meeting, see below;

- **Background:** In February 2014, City of Alexandria presented a burn building application **requesting \$300,000** to perform renovations to their Prototype 1, Class A Burn Building which is **3,990 square feet**.
- In accordance to VDFP grant policy, **Alexandria was awarded \$130,075** based on the square foot ratio applied to all applicants who are awarded a Burn Building Grant. This also happened to be the agency's "prorated" amount.
  - This formula takes the square foot of VDFP's Prototype 1 building, divides it by the square foot of the localities building, then multiplies that percentage by the amount being requested ( $1,730/3,990 = 43.36\% \times \$300,000$ ).
- Alexandria has recently provided VDFP supporting documentation for cost associated with the renovations based on this grant.
- The total associated costs for the renovation came to **\$130,196**, which is less than the **\$300,000 originally** requested and the awarding of this grant is based on.

- **Agency Policy:** Currently when a locality's actual expenses incurred do not equal or exceed the amount originally requested – VDFP re-applies the same square footage formula to the actual amount incurred.
- **Thus:** Alexandria's new grant award amount is **\$56,451** ( $1,730/3,990 = 43.36\% \times \$130,196$ ).
  - This amount is significantly less than the grant amount and Alexandria has informed VDFP they have no additional costs associated with the renovation project.
- **Conclusion:** Agency practice has always been to **"prorate"** the actual **"prorated amount"** if the expense is less than the original amount submitted.

**Committee Discussion:** It was discussed that the burn building issue is complicated and would therefore requires deliberation. Randy Wheeler stated that this meeting should solely make recommendations on areas to modify/enhance the burn building grant.

Cathy Hutchinson indicated that the policy/practice of the burn building grant should be combined into one document, similar to the ATL policy/procedure.

Rhonn James, Accounting Manager, cited that the agency process of prorating the prorated square footage has previously been practiced.

Randy Wheeler asked Chairman of VFSB, Walter Bailey, to consider the Alexandria proration at the next full board meeting, and provide the full board an opportunity to either vote on it or withhold it until the Burn Building Subcommittee meets.

**[Enclosure 2 and 5]**

**Vote:** Unanimous

**Motion Action:** To be presented at the full board meeting on Friday, June 4, 2015.

#### **Topic: Regional Fire Services Training Facility Grant Program (RFSTFG)**

**Motion:** To examine the Regional Fire Services Training Grant Policy and to modify/review Part F of the RGFSTF.

**Topic Discussion:** It was suggested **Part F** the RFSTFG policy related to Eligible Regional Fire Services Training must be reviewed and modified with the assistance of the Attorney General's office.

It was further discussed that a review must be done on **Part L** of the RFSTFG policy related to maximum amount citing *"The maximum amount of funds to be awarded for any Regional Fire Services Training Grant project will be set by the Board. The maximum*

*amount of any project award shall not exceed \$50,000 per jurisdiction per fiscal year funding cycle (July 1 – June 30)."*

VDFP will work with the Attorney General's Office.

**[Enclosure 6]**

**Vote:** Unanimous

**Motion Action:** To be presented at the full board meeting on Friday, June 4, 2015.

**Topic: VFIRS Hardware Grant Program**

**Motion:** Motion to reduce the VFIRS grant to \$700 as opposed to its current amount of \$1000.

**Topic Discussion:** The current grant allows up to \$1,000 per department. Brook Pittinger recommended reducing the VFIRS hardware grant to \$800 thus allowing other grantees the chance to take advantage of the extra funds that will be remaining. The amount is in accordance to the market value of VFIRS supported hardware such as laptops and computer.

The committee decided to recommend reducing the VFIRS grant to \$700 because it will allow another 35 grantees to take an opportunity of the funding.

Lastly, VDFP has been tasked on combining the policy and procedures of the VFIRS grant into one document.

**Vote:** N/A

**Motion Action:** To be presented at the full board meeting on Friday, June 4, 2015.

**[Enclosure 3 and 7]**

**Vote:** Unanimous

**Motion Action:** To be presented at the full board meeting on Friday, June 4, 2015.

**Miscellaneous Items**

**Topic: Inspection of Burn Building**

**Motion:** N/A

**Topic Discussion:** There was a discussion on the inspection of Burn Buildings after completion of renovation/creation as presently provided by The Structure Group (TSG). The committee members cited that the policy needs to be reviewed as it relates to five year review/inspection.

It was further brought up the existence of qualified personnel or other competitive companies near locality that can provide the same level of inspection/review of buildings. Joe Thompson, Grants and Local Aid Manager stated that the use of TSG gives the agency an unbiased review of Burn Building facilities.

Dave Layman asked Chairman Walter Bailey to assign the Burn Building Subcommittee the need to consider the inspection process.

**Vote:** N/A

**Motion Action:** N/A

**Topic: Contract Modification (Regarding: Burn Building Age)**

**Motion:** N/A

**Topic Discussion:** The Burn Building Contract will be reviewed/updated in October 2015. This topic has also been forwarded to the next BBSC meeting.

**Vote:** NA

**Motion Action:** NA

**ADJOURNMENT**

The subcommittee adjourned at 12:00pm.

Clerk of the Committee

**REVIEWED BY:**



Rhonn James  
Accounting Manager  
Finance Department

June 4, 2015  
Date

**Enclosures:**

1. Aid to Localities (ATL) Entitlement Program – **Enclosure 1 and 4**
2. Burn Building Grant Program – **Enclosure 2 and 5**
3. Regional Fire Services Training Facility Grant Program – **Enclosure 6**
4. VFIRS Hardware Grant Program - **Enclosure 3 and 7**